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# History of the Grand Army of the Republic and New Brunswick's Representation in the Civil War

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By JOHN LAWRENCE

Past Department Commander



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Read at a Meeting of the New Brunswick Historical  
Club, March 18, 1909

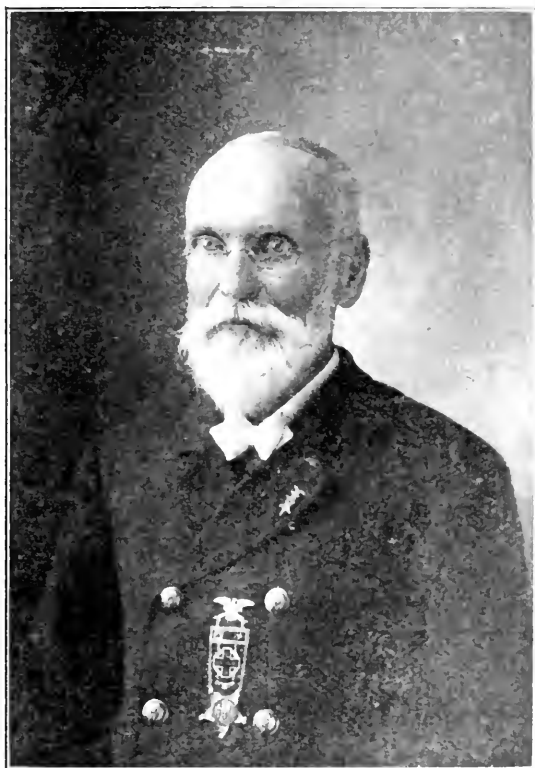
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# History of the Grand Army of the Republic and New Brunswick's Representation in the Civil War.



Past Department Commander John Lawrence.

John Lawrence, past department commander of the Grand Army of New Jersey read a paper at the March meeting of the New Brunswick Historical club on "History of the Grand Army of the Republic and New Brunswick's Representation in the Civil War." There was a good attendance, including many veterans. The paper was the most comprehensive on that subject prepared here and

will go down in history as an authority on New Brunswick's part in the war.

Mr. Lawrence was warmly congratulated by many of the professors present on the excellence of his work and the rules were suspended and he was made a member of the society.

The paper is in full as follows:

A short history of the Grand Army of the Republic and New Bruns

A. K. Remondement in the Civil War read before the Historical Club of New Brunswick, Rutgers College, March 18, 1939.

At the close of the Civil War when the services of the great volunteer army were no longer required, nearly one million and a quarter men were sent to their homes without earning the slightest disbursement in the body politic. This in itself was a great achievement and could be scarcely possible under any other flag but ours. The professional man went back to the practice of his profession, the mechanic to his trade, the clerk to his store and ledgers, and their return was hardly noticed. They left behind them on the various battlefields of the South more than 300,000 men who had given their lives that the nation should live.

Many thousands returned maimed for life and unable to earn a livelihood. All over the north were women in the weeds of widows who had been deprived of their natural support, and many fatherless children were clinging to them for their daily bread.

#### **Mayor Stephenson's Idea.**

It was under these conditions that Mayor B. F. Stephenson conceived the idea of a great fraternal organization, that should bind the 1,250,000 men in a bond of friendship. Dr. Stephenson in the practice of his profession in Danville, Ill., encountered a great deal of misery caused by the Civil War, and his idea was to start an organization that should not only bring out the fraternal spirit of the veterans, but might also mitigate the sufferings of the widows and orphan children of those with whom they had fought side by side. The war had made the soldiers tent mates and under the canvas one night in February, 1861, the grand idea came to the doctor to form a society that would perpetuate the friendship and valor of the war. The idea was discussed together in their camps and weary marches and while lying on their arms, awaiting the crash of battle; and the very seriousness of the situation which heightened their mutual reliance emphasized also the beauty of an organization that would bring into the peaceful pursuits of life similar qualities of love and helpful co-operation. The project was not at that time worked out to their entire satisfaction, but after the months out they kept in correspondence and close touch with each other. This was in the 14th Illinois Volunteer Infantry of which Dr. Stephenson had been surgeon.

#### **G. A. R. is Organized.**

Finally, in March, 1866, a meeting was held in Springfield, Ill., at which this

noble organization, unprecedented in the annals of history was given to the world. A large number of prominent Illinoisans and other officers were present at this meeting where a ritual was prepared and the members sworn to secrecy. This meeting resolved to organize themselves into a post of honor and named it "Lost Honor." This was the first organized post of the Grand Army of the Republic. They also formed themselves into a provisional department, electing Dr. Stephenson as the first department (or State) commander. A State encampment was held in Illinois, July 12th, 1866, at Springfield, at which General John M. Palmer, was elected department Commander. The first national encampment was held on November 20th, 1866, at Indianapolis. Dr. Stephenson presided and Gen. S. A. Hurlbut was elected the first commander-in-chief, and Dr. Stephenson was elected adjutant general. At first these national encampments were of a business nature but as the order grew, and the encampments were held at remote places, the need of something of a lighter character was apparent and various social customs were grafted on. Now they are delightful re-unions, looked forward to by the veterans and their families with pleasure. Yet they have lost nothing in dignity or capacity for business thereby, and have gained immensely in popularity.

#### **The Brotherhood of Battle.**

Thus was this Grand Army of the Republic the brotherhood of battle, born of the everlasting kinship of a common love of country, of a mutual bravery; of dangers shared and of a united, unflinching purpose. It had in it, too, not only the heaven of life but growth also; planted in a little tent, to blossom out in monster encampments. The war bred a caniness of spirit that could not die when the war ended. It is a brotherhood of men as well as memories. The necessary distinctions of war were swept away when the war ended. All men are equal in its councils and work; they stand side by side, shoulder to shoulder, in that final march of life, which ends only in the eternal bivouac. Privates, fustig generals, all sorts and conditions of men are in its ranks, even presidents of the United States have been in its ranks and gloried in the fact that they were entitled to wear the little bronze button of the order.

The purpose of the G. A. R. above all others is to minister to the needs of those sorrowing, widows and helpless children left behind by those who gave up their lives for "Old Glory." It is unique



and perhaps, the most remarkable organization ever called into being by circumstances; for only those who fought in the most gigantic rebellion in history can get into its ranks. An honorable discharge from the United States between April 1, 1861 and April, 1865, is the only qualification for membership; save that no man upon whom the stain of treason rests can be admitted to membership. Men of all ranks in life have honored it with their presence. Four Presidents of the United States have been proud to wear the insignia of the order. United States Senators, representatives in congress, judges, governors, legislators, and in fact, men from every walk in life have been proud to claim affiliation with it. Our own congressman the Hon. B. F. Howell may be seen in this hall of our national legislature wearing in the lapel of his coat the bronze button of membership. Its cardinal principles are fraternity, charity and loyalty. Other organizations claim to be fraternal, but if one would see real fraternity, let him come to a meeting of the G. A. R., for no friendship is so strong as that welded during the heat and in the blood of battle.

Bronze Plaque "Open Sesame."

In G. A. R. post rooms no introduction is necessary. A button in the coat is sufficient to bind two old veterans in a bond that can only be severed by death. I say advisedly being a member of other fraternal societies, that nowhere is that principle more strongly exemplified than among members of the G. A. R. We are also taught the broad principle of charity—not that alms-giving that parades itself before the world, but charity on the principle that we should not let our right hand know what our left hand doeth; on the principle of the Golden Rule. Thousands of widows and orphan children will rise up in the great day and call the G. A. R. blessed. Only eternity will reveal the good the order has done. It is hardly necessary to say that we are loyal. We revere the flag, teach patriotism in the public schools, and to the youth wherever practicable, chiefly through the efforts of the G. A. R., the flag of our country floats before or above almost every school house in the land. We are also taught reverence for our rulers, and are under a solemn pledge to work for good government and to frown upon disloyalty and anarchy in every form.

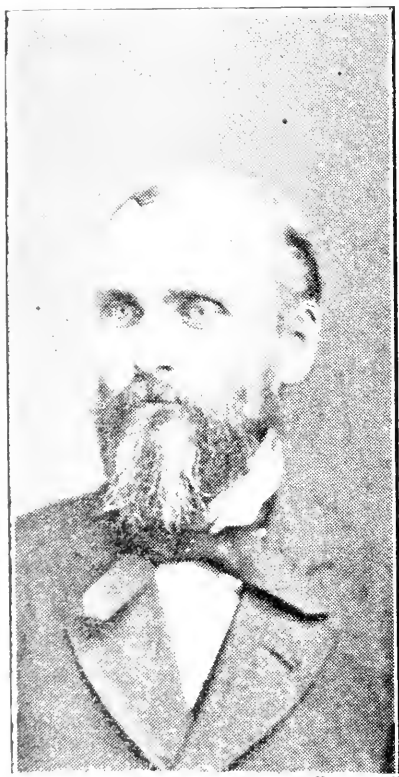
### A Loyal Organization

It seems hardly necessary to say that the G. A. R. is a loyal organization. With the Bible on its altar and the flag of the Union before us in every post room, our loyalty has never been ques-

tion of the flag, the emblem of American patriotism. Lessons of patriotism will not be lost in recognition of Memorial Day. The lawless will recognize the representation of authority, and the budding spirit of patriotism in youthful hearts will be expanded into a determination to oppose foreign or domestic foes. The beautiful and impressive ceremony of decorating the graves of our dead comrades, inaugurated by the G. A. R., has been adopted by so many other organiza-

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JOHN LAWRENCE,

From a Photograph taken at the Close of the Civil War, Upon His Return From the Front.

tions that the custom has become almost universal; and if after the G. A. R. has passed out of existence this beautiful custom is continued, it will constitute an additional legacy to future generations.

#### "Flag Day" Established

It was through the influence of this organization that Flag Day was established, and the beautiful display of our emblem of liberty on each June 14th will most fittingly celebrate the anniversary and

#### Numbers Smaller Each Year.

It may not be uninteresting at this point to give a few statistics of the rise and decline of the society. I will commence with the year 1878 and show its progress in membership up to and including 1906:

In 1878	the membership was	31,061
" 1881	"	85,856
" 1886	"	323,571
" 1890	"	409,489

#### High Water.

" 1894	"	369,083
" 1898	"	305,603
" 1902	"	263,746
" 1906	"	235,823

These losses since 1890 when the organization reached its zenith of prosperity were chiefly by death, and I submit here the losses beginning with 1891:

In 1891	loss by death	1,708
" 1894	"	27,140
" 1898	"	13,853
" 1902	"	5,806
" 1904	"	10,249
" 1905	"	14,885
" 1906	"	9,248

The percentage of deaths has increased since 1886 when the percentage was 0.93 to 3.90 in 1905, and as the years go by the percentage will greatly increase as

there are few in its ranks under 60 years of age. Through the efforts and influence of the G. A. R. national homes for disabled veterans have been established in several states, there being two in our own State of New Jersey, one at Kearny for men only and another at Vineland for veterans and their wives. These homes are maintained partly by the general government and partly by the State, so these old and disabled comrades are tenderly cared for in their declining years.

So much bearing on the national organization.

#### Department of New Jersey.

The Department of New Jersey was organized as a department, Dec. 10th, 1867, its present membership being about 4,200. It ranks eighth in the order of seniority. The department consists of 106 posts, scattered all over the State, and it wields a great influence in the councils of the national body. The present commander-in-chief is a member of Arrowsmith Post, No. 61, of Red Bank, the Hon. H. M. Nevins.

We are proud of our record as Jersey-men, for we hail from a common-wealth of long years standing, over whose soil trod the army of Washington in the struggle to establish this government, and which furnished about 88,000 young men to perpetrate that government established by our fathers. Our little State furnished some men whose names add lustre to the American name. McClellan, Kearny, Sewell, Ramsey, McAllister, Schoonover, Janeway, Trex, Runyon, Rustling, and a host of others, and her sons nobly upheld the honor of the State and added fresh lustre to the name of "Jersey Blue." Those who were fortunate enough to reach home did so without bringing a blot on the fair name of New Jersey. It has had for its commanders men who displayed the greatest bravery under fire and who distinguished themselves on many a bloody field. General Jardine was the G. A. R.'s first commander in 1868, and he has been succeeded by Gen. Ward, Gen. Goble, Major Burrows, Col. Haffy, Millikin and Houghton, Gen. Campbell, Gen. E. Burr Grubb, Gen. Donnelly, Col. Stahl and others including our present commander-in-chief, who left an arm on the field. All the commanders of our state department have upheld the dignity of the G. A. R. and have contributed to place the department though small in numbers, in the position of influence it now occupies. An effort will be made at the coming national encampment at Salt Lake City to have it meet in Atlantic City in 1910.

#### New Brunswick Men in the Civil War.

Before touching on the history of our local post, it may be interesting to say that our own town contributed its full quota to the Civil War. Under the first call of our martyred President Lincoln for 3 months men, one full company was sent to the front. It was designated Co. K, Third New Jersey Infantry and was under command of Capt. Carter, the father of our own Capt. Lee, who seems to have turned out to be a worthy son of a noble sire and whom Rutgers College is proud to claim as an alumnus. Under the next call for 75,000 men for three years, our city furnished two full companies of 100 men each, which were designated Co's F and G First Regiment N. J. Vols. They were commanded, respectively, by Capt. Elms Pouratt and Capt. A. M. Way, and constituted a part of Gen. Phil. Kern's First N. J. Brigade. Later, when another call was made by the president, the town again furnished a full company of 100 men which was designated Co. B, Ninth N. J. Vols. and was commanded by Captain C. W. Castner whose term of service with the 3 months men had expired. Later on, still another company was sent to the front and was attached to the Fourteenth Regiment as Co. K. Col. J. J. Janeway, was one of its original officers, being promoted to captain, major, lieutenant colonel, and brevet colonel. Captain John Manning was also an officer of this company, and many of our best young men were in its ranks. Thus it will be seen that New Brunswick contributed its full quota of men for the Civil War the above organizations being only a part of those who went. In addition to these companies many of the young men went into the Twenty-eighth Regiment, and other organizations and in the Navy. So that it is safe to say that our city sent over 700 young men to the front to help suppress the rebellion.

It may interest you to know that the writer served in the same company with several of the young men who left Rutgers College and enlisted in the ranks. I recall the names of Philbrick, who lost his life at Gettysburg, Bliss, Donney, Van Arsdale, Messerside, Vanderhoff and Siebert. These young men belonged to the same class as the Rev. A. J. Campbell. Three of them became ministers and Van Arsdale is now assistant pastor of the Christian Intelligencer. All of them came home commissioned officers except Philbrick, who was killed at Gettysburg. Thus you see that not only a city but your beloved Alma Mater contributed her share to the bloody contest.

### City Sent 700 Men.

New Brunswick has no reason to be ashamed of the number of men she sent to the front. Without having access to the exact figures, it is safe to say she furnished over 700 men. Almost before

the call of the first gun fired on Fort Sumpter had ceased to reverberate through the land a mass meeting was held in the First Reformed church; patriotic addresses were delivered but the climax was reached when ex Mayor Garrett Conover started to sing the "Star Spangled Banner" which was taken up by the audience, waving to their feet and waving handkerchiefs, all showing the most unbounded enthusiasm. Shortly after this meeting the call came for 3-months men and our city responded with more than could be counted. One company, Co. K, of the Third Regiment was accepted and sent to Washington as part of a Jersey brigade commanded by General Theodore Runyon. Our townsman, Stephen Moore was lieutenant colonel and John H. Janeway (brother of H. L.) was chaplain. The New Brunswick company was officered by Capt. Castner, First Lieutenant Samuel Ross and Second Lieutenant Geo. M. Stebbins. Owing to the short term of their enlistment they saw no actual fighting, but left a memento behind them, Fort Runyon, which they built at the end of the Long Bridge and which constituted one of the principal defences of Washington. Many of this company re-enlisted for longer terms.

Then came the call for 3-year men, and again New Brunswick came promptly to the front with more than her quota. Two companies F and G of the First Regiment, were recruited and sent to the front. Both of these had been militia companies and formed a nucleus of 200 men, Co. F being the old Deshler and Col G Olden Guards. Co. F was officered as follows: Capt. Thos. Fournatt, Lieutenants Smith G. Blythe, David Thompson, Henry C. Warner, (N. H. VanArsdale now assistant editor of the Christian Intelligencer promoted from Co. G), John H. Voorhees, L. L. F. Elkins, A. L. Bine and Benj. Moffitt.

The officers of Co. G were Capt. A. M. Way, First Lieutenant J. D. Wyckoff, Robert Boggs, Carley Swan and Howard M. Gilman, a grandson of Rev. Dr. Webb. Capt. Way was promoted to major and Capt. Fournatt was appointed colonel of the Third Third Regiment and participated in Sherman's famous march from Atlanta to the sea. Both of these companies were part of General Phil. Kearsy's brigade and participated in all the battles of the Army of the Potomac, from Bull Run to

Cold Harbor, after which many of the men re-enlisted in other companies.

### A Battle Incident.

I cannot refrain from mentioning an incident of the battle of the wilderness: Our Jersey brigade was on the extreme right of the line. During the engagement Lieutenant Carley Swan, of Co. G had both legs shot from under him by a shell, and our line was pushed back some distance leaving Swan between the firing lines. Capt. Wyckoff with Christian fortitude and courage went to his dying friend and tenderly prayed that the Heavenly Father would be merciful to him. This was done with shot, shell and bullets flying thick around them. Such an example of courage should not go unrecorded.

The next full company furnished by our city was Co. B, Ninth N. J. Vols., and Captain Castner having re-enlisted was placed in command, Charles H. Sofield and Thomas Bennett were subsequently captains of this company. The lieutenants were: L. Bartholomew, L. D. Shepard, John Bennett, E. E. Hubbs, James Loughlin and R. E. Cogan. This regiment was with the Barnside expedition and participated in all its engagements from Roanoke Island to Goldsboro, N. C., March 21st, 1865, and made a record of which they may well feel proud. Co. K Fourteenth regiment was the next full company recruited here. It was officered by Capt. J. J. Janeway, afterwards promoted to major and lieutenant colonel and brevet colonel; Lieutenants John L. Manning, promoted to captain; Henry D. Bookstaver, James Chaffey, L. A. Hoffman and E. D. Mandeville. This regiment was mustered in Aug. 26th, 1862 and was commanded by Colonel, afterwards, General Trex, and had its first taste of battle at Monocacy, Md. It was afterwards transferred to the Third Division Sixth Army Corps under General John Sedgewick and added fresh luster to the name of Jersey Blue. Many young men enlisted also in Co. I, of this regiment, and should be credited to New Brunswick.

The next command to take the field was Co. H, First N. J. cavalry, composed almost wholly of young men from this city. Among its officers I find only two natives of this town—Lieutenant Alexander Canse, a son of a one-time sexton of the First Presbyterian church, and Alexander Stewart, who was killed in action.

### Tribute to General Janeway.

Quite a number of our young men were also in Co. L, of this celebrated regiment, which was raised by Lieutenant Hugh H. Janeway, assisted by his uncle, Henry L. Janeway, one of your honored



1901.

Slowly they come with throb of drum,  
The flag with its scars above,  
In memory's name, the loyal flame  
They feed from the crulse of love,  
Saoulder to shoulder, they come in view,  
Side by side in the dear old blue;  
Halting and bent, and with faltering feet,

Onward they plod, through the cheering  
street,

Burdens of age under blouses of blue—  
Many the dead, and the living so few,  
Loyalty's army, remnant of yore  
Drifts toward the mist of the silent  
shore.

JOHN LAWRENCE

March 18, 1909.











